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ARMENIA

American Com

February 21, 1916

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief

70 Fifth Avenue, New York

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More complete information may be had from Walter H. Mallory, Field Secretary, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York.

The Committee urges immediate attention to this pressing need, and asks that all contributions be sent to Mr. Charles R. Crane, Treasurer, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York.

BEWARE OF SOLICITORS

An Appeal to the Citizens of the United States on behalf of the Armenian Sufferers

The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief must continue to plead with a generous people to give more freely than they have done to further our efforts to save nearly a million Armenians who are perishing for want of food and clothing. The Committee receives some data which it cannot publish, but the facts given herewith are typical of what are coming to us from Russia, Persia and Turkey.

The Committee has perfect facilities for distributing relief. Our only need is MORE MONEY. We, therefore, appeal to churches, boards of trade and all other organizations of men and women as well as to individuals in every walk of life to make gifts, large or small, in order that we may save a worthy people from death.

I. TURKEY

1. Extracts from a letter of a missionary in Turkey, Sept. 25, 1915

"Words are inadequate to describe the utter misery and destitution of these hordes of emigrants who are today roaming all over Asia Minor. The roads are crowded with thousands upon thousands of these unfortunate wretches considering themselves lucky if they were able to procure—at the sacrifice of a small fortune—an ox cart for their families and a few belongings. Many of them on foot—men, women and children, tired, haggard, and half starved—the pictures of want and desolation. All personal property such as furniture, clothes, tools, etc., which they could not take with them had to be left behind, and the Turks quite openly distributed them among themselves, often even in the presence of their owners! As regards the houses evacuated by the Armenians, a little more red tape was gone through but the effect was the same. The Armenian proprietor was called before a magistrate, made to sign a document that he had sold the house to a certain individual (of course always a Moslem) and was given a roll of banknotes. No sooner had he left the room than the money was taken from him by the police and returned to the magistrate to be used in hundreds of similar cases!

"Unfortunately the hardships of exile and privation are not the only dangers to which the Armenians are exposed. There can be no doubt that many of them—chiefly men—have been massacred in cold blood. Although no instances of this seem to have occurred during my stay in —, I was informed by very trustworthy sources that shortly before my arrival about 170 most prominent Armenians from — and neighboring towns had been shot near —, whither they had been exiled in June. I have all the more reason to credit this report because when I made inquiries concerning two of the men, whose relatives live in America, and who are insured with American companies, the Vali replied evasively but finally said that he has heard that they escaped from custody and had disappeared!

"However, even if no Armenians had been killed outright, the result would be the same for the deportation as carried out at present is merely a polite form of massacre. Unless the whole movement be stopped at once there is, I am firmly convinced, not the slightest chance of any of the exiles surviving this coming winter, except possibly the very wealthiest among them.

"The fact remains that the Turks are rapidly depleting their country of some of the thriftiest, most intelligent, and in many respects, the most valuable elements of their population. One has only to walk through the streets of any town in the interior to realize how this deportation has wrought havoc with the life of the community; nearly all doctors, dentists, tailors, carpenters are gone—in short, every profession or trade requiring the least skill has been stopped, not to mention the complete stagnation of all business of any consequence. Even Turks are realizing the danger, and in some villages they petitioned the authorities to allow certain Armenians to remain! It is therefore all the more surprising that the Ottoman Government persists in this shortsighted policy, for there can be little doubt that every place left vacant by an Armenian will—irrespective of the outcome of the European conflict—have to be filled by a foreigner, as the Turk has proved himself totally incapable of doing this kind of work."

2. The American Ambassador at Constantinople, in a cablegram dated January 21st, states that out of the Philadelphia and Crane funds enough remains for distribution during another month, but that an additional \$100,000 will be necessary in order to keep the most needy Armenians alive through the winter. The Ambassador strongly urges that an earnest effort be made to raise this amount, which is necessary in addition to the amounts already raised. The Ambassador further states that the local relief committee has made arrangements under which it expends \$9,000 each week, and that its ability to reach the needy is constantly increasing. By conservative estimate there are in Turkey about five hundred thousand survivors from the massacres. The majority of these are women and children, who are generally dependent on charity. In a majority of cases they are entirely unable to work, and in many cases the Turkish Government prohibits them from working or earning a living. The deported Armenians have not as yet been allowed to settle down definitely, and deportations have not entirely ceased.

3. A prominent American in Constantinople writes, "The funds for relief, which are greatly needed, should be rapidly augmented. As expected, the attitude of the Government at first assumed against distribution is becoming less pronounced. Not that the official heart is softening, but other questions are filling the official mind and the pretended fear that the Armenians would rise and become a powerful ally to the enemies of Turkey is becoming less a matter calling for action."

4. Extract—Letter forwarded to Ambassador Morgenthau by an American Consul:

"Yesterday a delegation of ten Christian men came to me to beg me to notify you that they and nearly all the men of their community and their families are in dire want, that the supply of flour and wheat is cut off by the government, and they and hundreds of others will die if there is not relief. They said perhaps you could get relief from America. I am writing this at their request and do not want to add to your burdens and know that you will do all you can.

"This condition is now general among all classes of people here."

5. The American Ambassador in a telegram, dated January 26, 1916, states that the Armenian Patriarch requests that the following be communicated to the Armenians in the United States:

"First: They should contribute as generously as possible to the relief funds.

"Second: Armenians in other countries should abstain from public utterances and demonstrations of a character calculated to jeopardize the safety and lives of Armenians in Turkey.

"Third: Armenians throughout the world should continue at all times to appeal to the humanitarian feelings of the allies of Turkey and of neutrals to aid in keeping alive the Armenians in Turkey until the arrival of normal times once more."

II. RUSSIA

1. Extract from a letter from Rev. Richard Hill, member of Commission, at Tiflis, dated December 12, 1915:

"First of all let me repeat the words of my first cable and emphasize with all the vigor of earnestness that the situation here in respect to the Armenian refugees is fully as bad as we had been led to believe, and that to attempt to adequately describe the horrors of it would be a task altogether beyond me. As for the figures, I need not repeat them; they stand at the beginning of my letter and speak for themselves, that is, they tell in a bald, colorless way the actual facts of the case, but it would take the pen of a Dickens to give the pathos and misery of it proper justice.

"Last evening I dined with a gentleman who had come up out of Persia a few months ago, just about the time the last great exodus took place. He relates that on the arrival of his train at Anni, on the great Erivan Plain, he saw one of the most moving sights of his life. That great level plain was black with a slow moving mass of humanity, that seemed to fill and overflow the horizon as far as the eye could see. He states that they must have numbered close on to 250,000 and that they were slowly, aimlessly, listlessly wandering in the torrid heat of that September day. Children were dying by the hundreds, sometimes the frenzied mothers would in their helpless, mad grief, fling their children from them over the roadside, into the fields, so as not to see the dying agonies of their emaciated and starved babies. Old women and men were dropping out by the roadside, too far gone to go another step, epidemics had already appeared and were claiming their victims by the hundreds, and amidst this scene of death and desolation, women were seen giving birth to children in all the pangs of that terrible time in the life of a woman. From that throng, he said, there went up to heaven such an unutterable wail of woe and misery, that he was compelled to close down the window in his compartment to try, if possible, to shut out the sound of that concentration of agony and pain which was wrung from the lips of those homeless, destitute wanderers.

"Out of the hundred stories that are daily coming to hand, it is hard to make a choice, for all are most interesting and touching. We hear, for instance, of Cossack transports picking up scores of little children left by the roadside to die and of their bringing those in on their wagons, sharing their frugal meals with them, of women found dead by the roadside and a baby trying to waken the mother by pulling at her face and demanding its food. Of new-born babies left just as they were born, carelessly flung aside, the mother often dying shortly afterwards, or of a Russian officer out at the front sitting crouched over a little fire that he had made out of a few sticks, and of a little girl stiff with cold and hungry, slipping into the circle of heat of the fire, and without apology snuggling up to him and going fast asleep in a moment in the kindly warmth of the fire, and of that officer sitting cramped for hours in order to let the little waif sleep in the folds of his big army coat.

"But why go on. The tale is an endless one and grows more horrible as the details slowly filter in.

"I have seen some myself, have looked into the faces of hunted, haunted children prematurely old through the months of horrors that they have gone through, have looked too into the eyes of young women and girls, alas, too apparent already the condition they are in, hateful outrage and nightmare behind them, more and worse facing them after a month or two. I have seen just a little, but that little is enough to give me an idea of what the future holds in this line, and quite enough to sicken and sadden.

"This, that I send you now, is but a fragmentary, sketchy touch of a condition serious and needy in the extreme, and I hastily send this so that you may be prepared for a picture of misery and sorrow, sad and pathetic. Dr. Wilson, I hope, will be here in a few days and I shall have the value of his counsel and help, and hope by that time we will have had word from you as to the extent of our work, so that we will soon be able to report definite work being started."

2. Extracts from a letter from Dr. Samuel G. Wilson, head of our Commission, in Tiflis, dated December 16, 1915:

"I arrived in Tiflis yesterday evening. This morning we organized the local Committee, in accordance with your instructions. The Hon. J. W. Smith, the Consul, takes a hearty interest in the work and will act as a member of the Committee.

"At Petrograd I saw our Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Mayre. He took a hearty interest in the work of relief, expressing deep concern and strong sympathy for the sufferers, telling me some of the terrible tales he had heard of the atrocities in Turkey. Afterward I presented a statement to him setting forth our purpose and requesting his cooperation, and especially in securing for us the permission of the Russian Government for the establishment of Relief Work and the organization of the Committee in the Caucasus. I expressed the hope that such permission might precede me to Tiflis by telegram. This was the case, and for this we are grateful for the speedy action of the Russian Government in answer to the Ambassador's request. Mr. Mayre was most considerate and efficient.

"Meanwhile in Tiflis Mr. Hill was working on the preliminaries in connection with Mr. Smith. They found all the officials most friendly. Prince Orloff, the adjutant of the Viceroy, assured them of His Highness's pleasure in the work we wished to undertake.

"The number of refugees, after deducting for tens of thousands who have died of exposure and disease, is 170,000 in the Caucasus, 15,000 in the Turkish province behind the Russian lines and 40,000 from Turkey in Persia, outside of Urumia Plain and Tabriz region. Most of these are in great need.

"One of the saddest things is the number of orphans. In one list, made up at Etchmiadzin, were 2,500 babies, whose parents were lost or killed. The Armenians also have a system of kitchens and also of doling out food or cash.

"In spite of all that has been done, the need is very great. The refugees have barely had food enough to keep them alive. Now the severe winter of the Caucasus is upon them. They have not proper clothing or bedding. In the villages they huddle together with the animals to have warmth. Prices of food are rising higher and higher so that the allowance of cash made to each one can purchase less food. Famine is threatening in some districts of the Caucasus. The army calls for supplies of food. So the poor refugees, especially in the villages where most of them are stationed, are shut up to dire distress unless greater and immediate help is given to them.

"As we cannot hope to reach effectively the whole 200,000, we are expecting to accept the suggestion of the Russian Government Relief Committee which meets with the approval of Mr. Smith and to concentrate our relief work on the refugees of a certain district which we will agree upon, to contain 10,000 or 20,000 refugees as you think the American Committee can undertake. This will release relief funds for other districts so we will share in relieving all through spending our funds on a part. I will write again after seeing the Prince Orloff."

III. PERSIA

1. Extract—Letter from Robert M. Labaree, Urumia, December 21, 1915.

"I am writing just before supper after a strenuous day. It was quilt distribution day, and we had the biggest crowd yet, but we had over 400 quilts ready and I do not believe more than 200 or 300 ticket holders went away without quilts. Of course with the ticket holders always comes a crowd of those who have not got tickets, or who wish to get a second quilt, and between them and the ticket holders we have all that we can handle. I hope that another distribution will about see us through the first round of this quilt business, but then we shall have to begin to think what we shall do with those whose tickets call for two to seven quilts; for some of these mountain families number over twenty persons. The highest number I have seen has been twenty-eight in one family. Still after this first round we shall have to pause, and wait until our exchequer gets filled up—it is deplorably low just now. Since I came to my room, the tag ends of the crowds have found their way to my private room. The most interesting case is a little lad that hales from Berwer, the other side of the mountains. His father, mother and three brothers have recently died, and he has himself been sick. I can't find that he has any relatives in the world except one cousin, and the boy does not know where he is. Such pitiful cases all the time are coming to our attention; I wish the orphanage could be enlarged to five times its present capacity of sixty. It is well and very economically managed, but it is desperately poor, and our Relief Committee has had to help it out more than once to keep it running. . . .

"I was interrupted in order to make accounts of wheat and flour distribution for today, and I cast up accounts for the first two months. We have given 3,900 loads of wheat and flour and 4,950 quilts, representing an outlay of at least 35,000 tomans. We can't keep this up. Hope the Russian promises will be kept or we will be in an awful hole."

2. Extract—Letter from Mrs. F. G. Coan, Tabriz, December 6, 1915.

"Miss Lewis is in Salmas. She is running a quilt factory with 100 women at work every day. They made 1,000 quilts in two weeks. Now they are trying to send a lot to Bachkala. Mr. McDowell registered 1,300 names of refugees (heads of families) and we hear there are many thousands more and are still coming in from the mountains across the border in Turkey. Mr. Pittman writes that there is very much sickness and suffering among the people. Miss Grove and Mrs. Muller have charge of quilt making here to send to Salmas. They made 140 and sent to Salmas."

IV. THE ATTITUDE OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

There has been considerable uncertainty as to the attitude of the German Government towards the Armenian Atrocities. While the massacres have been defended by Count Von Reventlow, it is on record that on August 9th the German Ambassador at Constantinople filed a protest couched in the following words:

"The German Embassy regrets to have to realize that, according to information received from impartial and reliable sources, acts of violence, such as massacres and plunders, which could not be justified by the aim that the Imperial Government was pursuing, instead of being checked by the local authorities, regularly followed the expulsion of Armenians, so that most of them perished before reaching their destination. It is chiefly from the provinces of Trebizond, Diarbekir, and Erzeroum that these facts are reported; in some places, as in Mardin, all Christians, without distinction of race or religion had the same fate.

"At the same time the Imperial Government has thought it right to extend the measure of expatriation to the other provinces of Asia Minor, and very recently the Armenian villages of the district of Izmit, near the capital, have been evacuated under similar conditions.

"Under such circumstances the German Embassy, by order of its Government, is obliged to remonstrate once more against these acts of horror."

With the aid of the American Red Cross the Committee is about to send a physician with medical supplies to Tiflis, where there is much sickness among the refugees.

As an encouragement to all givers it should be noted that the Rockefeller Foundation has added substantial sums to our contributions during the past three months and will continue to do so.

All checks should be sent to Charles R. Crane, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Respectfully yours,

SAMUEL T. DUTTON,
Secretary.